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SUBJECT The CIA: Part I

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FRANK REYNOLDS: ...Another inveterate of the Central Intelligence Agency, is always on the various congressional oversight committees. This is a two-part series on the CIA and the turbulent times it has been through in recent years.

Our correspondent, Brit Hume.

BRIT HUME: It was an extraordinary scene. A poison-dart gun worthy of a James Bond movie was passed across the table at a public hearing to be inspected by a panel of senators, while the head of the Central Intelligence Agency told them how it worked. But it was an extraordinary time. The CIA, the once-feared and super-secret American spy agency, known as "The Company," was undergoing the most searching and public investigation given any such agency in history.

That was 1975, in the heady days after Watergate, when investigation was the order of the day here in Congress. And the findings of these investigations made headlines for more than a year.

Fidel Castro had been the target of no fewer than five murder plots by the CIA between 1960 and '65. At one point, the agency recruited a Mafia figure to help. All efforts failed.

The CIA also tried to poison Patrice Lumumba of the Congo in 1960, but failed. Lumumba was later murdered by political opponents.

Three other foreign leaders -- Diem of South Vietnam, Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, and General Rene Schneider